

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2963

As Reported by House Committee On:
Commerce & Labor

Title: An act relating to collective bargaining for Washington State University employees who are enrolled in academic programs.

Brief Description: Authorizing collective bargaining for Washington State University employees who are enrolled in academic programs.

Sponsors: Representatives Conway, Campbell, Chase, Hasegawa, Sullivan, Simpson, Seaquist, Appleton, Sells, Wood, Green, Blake, Ericks, Kenney, Williams, McIntire, Pettigrew, Kirby, Moeller, Fromhold, Hunt, VanDeWege, Ormsby and Hudgins.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 1/25/08, 2/4/08 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Makes the public employees' collective bargaining law applicable to teaching assistants and research assistants at Washington State University.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Conway, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Green, Moeller and Williams.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Condotta, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Crouse.

Staff: Jill Reinmuth (786-7134).

Background:

Employees enrolled in academic programs at Washington State University, like other students, are exempt from the state civil service law. As a result, they do not have a right to engage in collective bargaining under the state civil service collective bargaining law. They also are not granted a right to engage in collective bargaining under the public employees'

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collective bargaining law. Legislation enacted in 2002 granted that right to teaching assistants and research assistants at the University of Washington.

Summary of Bill:

The public employees' collective bargaining law applies to Washington State University (University) with respect to certain employees enrolled in academic programs.

Intent

The stated intent is to promote cooperative labor relations between the University and the employees who provide instructional, research, and related academic services while enrolled as students. The Legislature does not intend to restrict or prohibit, with respect to matters outside the scope of bargaining:

- the exercise of shared governance functions of the faculty; and
- the exercise of the functions of the graduate and professional student association, the associated students organization, or other similar organizations.

The University is not restricted from:

- considering the merits, necessity, or organization of any program or activity, including whether to establish, modify, or discontinue a program or activity; and
- having sole discretion over student admission requirements, criteria for awarding degrees, academic requirements for selection of student employees, initial appointment, and the content and supervision of courses, curricula, grading requirements, and research programs.

Bargaining Unit

For covered student employees, the members of an appropriate bargaining unit are:

- teaching assistants and research assistants;
- staff assistants, project assistants, and veterinary assistants;
- tutors, readers, and graders; and
- employees with substantially equivalent duties enrolled in an academic program.

Students who are research assistants are excluded if they perform research primarily related to their dissertation and have incidental or no service expectations placed on them by the University.

Scope of Bargaining

The scope of bargaining excludes the following subjects:

- the ability to terminate an employee who is not meeting the University's academic requirements;
- the amount of tuition or fees, except that tuition/fee remission or waiver is within the scope of bargaining;
- the University's academic calendar; and
- the number of students to be admitted to a class or section.

Compensation

The compensation provisions in a collective bargaining agreement may not exceed the amount or percentage established by the Legislature. However, the employer may provide additional compensation that exceeds that provided by the Legislature. If a compensation provision is affected by subsequent modification of an appropriations act, the parties must bargain for a replacement provision.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Academic employees at Washington State University should have the same rights as academic employees at the University of Washington. A strong majority wants to engage in collective bargaining. One-half of instructional hours, lab hours, and other classes are taught by academic employees. This workforce is critical to the university.

The language of this bill is the same as the bill giving collective bargaining rights to academic employees at the University of Washington. This language has been successful. The Public Employment Relations Commission has already ruled what it means. It protects Washington State University's management rights.

There is collective bargaining for academic employees at more than 60 universities across the country. Washington State University is one of only a few major public research institutions in the west that lacks these rights.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Mary Jo Klinker and Sky Wilson, Academic Student Employee Coordinating Committee/United Auto Workers; and Ken Lang, United Auto Workers.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.